

NAMIQUEPA IS OLD AND BIG, YET IT IS PRIMITIVE CITY OF MEXICO

Area is Large, Dating Back to the Time of the Conquistadores; Church Established by Early Padres Still There; Natives Have Few of the Things That People in Civilized Life Are Accustomed to.

BY GEORGE H. CLEMENTS.

FIELD HEADQUARTERS, Punitive Expedition U. S. Army, near Namiquipa, Mexico, April 24.—This camp is located near one of the most picturesque and one of the oldest towns in the state of Chihuahua (older even than the present city of Chihuahua) and one of the largest municipalities in the American continent. It is a city of 10,000 people, the largest city in the United States, in point of area, and is one of the most primitive in every direction from the center of the country. The town is situated on the eastern bank of the Rio Grande, the old mission church built by the conquistadores as they passed that way in their quest for treasure in the latter years of the 16th century.

Namiquipa was an old city when the site of Socorro was first seen by the invading Spaniards. After Santa Barbara it is the oldest city in the state of Chihuahua. When the gold hunters passed through this beautiful valley, within a very few years after the conquest of the City of Mexico, they found the rich soil being tilled by the Pueblo Indians. Good crops of corn were grown by means of irrigation from the Rio Santa Maria and the farmers were living in little communities scattered along the full length of the stream.

Primitives Get Big Grant.
The Franciscan friars, who always accompanied the soldiers, saw a splendid opportunity for proselytizing and established a mission with a small church and a school. The Indians, to the Christian faith, the priests were given a grant of land which extended for five leagues in every direction from the front door of the "iglesia" or church, or covering nearly all of the arable land in this immediate portion of the long drawn out valley of the Santa Maria.

Though this camp is fully nine miles from the old mission church, it is only on the outskirts of the town, a circumstance which causes the people to be somewhat unfamiliar with the Mexican habit in the matter of building cities, in a way.

People Abjectly Poor.
Rich as the country is in the way of agricultural possibilities, the people are poor to the point of abject poverty and painful evidence of the poverty may be seen on every hand. There is a lack of windows in the houses. This lack may be found in the houses of the comparatively rich or well to do in the town called "Pueblo" by the people. The "Padre" who presides over the destinies of the parish of which Namiquipa is the chief city, explained the peculiar condition as to windows and particularly as to the lack of glazed windows, by saying that many of the houses now standing and occupied as homes were built many years ago, when glass was a luxury even in Spain. From which it would require to have been brought by sailing vessels to Vera Cruz, thence on the backs of mules, a distance of nearly 1,500 miles, making its cost prohibitive even to the rich. The poor Indian turned the horse's head of the product of his toil over to him.

No Flowers in Homes.
Window glass is not the only com-



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American Soldiers Look Up on It With Yearning; Natives Are Handicapped.

en, they are also hard to handle, because of their size, shape and general slipperiness.

Whole Family to Market.
While the natives of the city of Namiquipa are exhibiting a spirit of aloofness, particularly in the matter of trading with the army, the natives of the valleys farther removed from the influence which are supposed to animate their more civilized brethren, are not so reserved or distant. They come in in droves and bring on their lean mules, burros or horses or in their ox carts or more pretentious horse drawn wagons, whatever they may have for sale. In nearly every instance they are accompanied by every member of the family and the little cavaliers invariably present slight picturesque touches to the extreme, which are always of interest to the American soldiers.

The size of the cavalcade is rarely an indication of the amount of stuff the heart of the house and the commander of the party may have for sale. He may have a single dozen of "chiquilites" (peas) or a half dozen of "pan dulce" (cookies) or a hen, or he may be a contractor who has a thousand pounds of "maiz," pronounced "maice," and meaning just plain corn, which the quartermaster is always glad to get for the cavalry and artillery horses constantly streaming through the camp to the "front," wherever that may be.

People Not Friendly.
For some reason not explained, the people of the business section of Namiquipa are not as friendly disposed toward us as are the farmers or as are those who are not in trade. The only form in which they manifest their dislike, if it is dislike, is by refusing to trade with the men, merchants and others who have the right to go into the town for trading purposes. They look longingly at the goods in our stores but they firmly insist in most cases that they are "out" of the particular articles of food or clothing which the prospective purchasers seem to have set their hearts upon. This disposition is believed by the pessimists connected with the expedition, and there are always a few in every organization who are inclined to look for rain on the sunniest day, to be due to the fact, not that the people of the town are particularly friendly to us, but that they are afraid we may make reprisals if he hears that the Americans have been permitted to buy food.

Natives Have No Shoes.
When the matter of the poverty of the people was under consideration in this article, some mention should have been made of the prevailing styles in footwear, or the lack of it, in this benighted part of the world. The people of Mexico, so far as shoes, as Americans understand that term, in this valley, that if a native appeared in camp wearing a pair of shoes and heels and looking like anything but a moccasin, the chances are that he would at once be under suspicion of being a soldier and probably placed in detention or under surveillance.

We have not yet reached those portions of the republic where the sandal is the commonly accepted form of foot protection. This valley, with its elevation of 7,500 feet above sea level, is so cold as to require that if the foot is to be covered at all, it be covered all over. For that reason when a man or woman wears anything like a shoe at all, it is made of rawhide, sewed with the hairy side of the skin out and sewed with threads of sinew or strips of rawhide. Until a change comes over the spirit of the people of Namiquipa, I don't look to see American shoe manufacturers rushing to the secretary of the Namiquipa chamber of commerce with inquiries for sites for shoe factories, nor do I expect to see American jobbers in footwear establishing themselves with heavy stock of shoes for sale to the natives.

Baling Wire Much Sought.
It has long been an established fact that the average native of the rural districts of the northern portion of Mexico has been inclined to look on baling wire as the most valuable invention of the "Gringo," for the reason that the aforesaid native could put the baling wire, discarded by the American, to so many uses. He could build a hut by using it as binding for the eaves or other sticks used as the main building material or he could use a pair of wheels together and make a wagon on which he might ride or haul a load. The people of the Namiquipa valley are very much like their brethren to the border. They never saw much baling wire till the punitive expedition appeared upon their horizon but they were not long in catching on to its value. At first the soldiers threw the stuff away. They are not so careless now. Every strand of it is worth an eye and the three strands on every leg are converted into three perfectly good eggs as fast as they are taken from the few hay-bales which find their way into the quartermaster's stores.

Coal and Gasoline Expensive.
Coal oil and gasoline are, for all sorts of purposes, from water buckets or receptacles in which to carry water to market, to braziers in which to burn charcoal for cooking or heating purposes, run baling wire a close second as to value in the minds of the simple natives of this section of the state of Chihuahua and every can of oil or gasoline emptied at the aviation and automobile station is immediately converted into 20 eggs and "eggs are eggs" in the dictionary of this camp.

Think Americans Mollified.
One of the things which excites the wonder of the natives of this section of those who have served with one or another of the more revolutionary armies which have flourished during the past five or six years, is the fact that the American soldier puts up a tent when he goes into camp for more than merely overnight. Their soldiers, even the officers, never did anything so indicative of physical weakness, and they are rather outspoken in their wonder if the American is not a "holly cod" after all, to be whipped out of his boots by the elements if not by Villa and the remnants of his famous regiments of "Dorados" (Golden Ones).

While the native peasant farmer is excited by the number of tents erected on the great grassy plain overlooking the southern or lower end of the town, he calls him "holly cod" and is excited by the constant stream of "soldados Americanos" which pours through the great city of tents.

asked a "paisano" how many men he thought had passed through Namiquipa since they began to pass through a week or two ago. "Veinte mil y mas" (twenty thousand and more) was the reply and I don't blame him for thinking that they were so numerous because of the constancy of the stream and its volume. It's a safe bet that the man I asked was one of the conservatives. Some would have made the number at least twice twenty thousand.

Soldiers See Great Change.
Many of the American soldiers who are here for the first time are already making plans to come into this section of the country upon the establishment of a permanent peace, with a view toward converting some of the fertile irrigable lands into productive farms. Men who see Mexico only from the trains seldom get more than a mere rudimentary idea of its vastness or its possibilities. It is probable that a real comprehensive view of the coun-

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NAMIQUEPA HAS ANCIENT ASPECT

No Window Glasses in the Place Because Was Built at an Early Date.

try by any considerable number of persons could only be afforded by some thing like the expedition. It is at least true that there are more Americans in position now to discuss the possibilities of the state of Chihuahua than there have been before. They have seen some of the finest country out of doors, which only needs as the American commercial club secretary would say, "to be tickled with a harvest." The natives do not seem to be able to do the tickling, and while they do raise fair crops, they are mere "smiles" compared with the "laughs" an American would get at the other end of the place.

Farmers Plow With Oxen.
It is a safe prediction that were this section of the country ever to fall under American domination or be thrown open to settlement by Americans under proper safeguards, the movements of people in the past as related in history would pale into insignificance in comparison. Railroads are needed to modernize the place and to replace the pack burro and the two wheeled cart as means of transportation of the crops which will grow under proper cultivation. On a number of the farms in sight of this camp the farmers are attempting to stir the soil with crooked sticks and bundles of brush, the duty of covering the grain being planted. Instead of the harrow in use for the same purpose in almost every other country in the world.

Plenty of Grass.
The hills and plains not given over to agriculture are covered with rich grass, enough to feed many times the number of "scrubs" now being pastured upon them, and when they are stocked with cattle, the new stock should also be of new blood.

Though Namiquipa is almost under the shadow of the Triple of Cancer, the elevation of the town and the surrounding country, above sea level,

MEXICAN FORCES GET OUT OF WAY

Move Into Chihuahua From Territory Where Americans Operating.

BY GEO. H. CLEMENTS.
Field Headquarters Punitive Expedition Near Namiquipa, Mex., April 24.—(By way of Columbus, N. M., April 24.)—Reports received at headquarters from the south and elsewhere are to the effect that the Carrancistas are evacuating the Teniente country and concentrating at Chihuahua.

Gen. Herrera, before entraining his men at Minaca, gave as a reason for quitting the country that he wanted to give a free hand to the Americans in the matter of riding the territory of Villistas. The Carrancista garrison at Bustillos and other points closer to Chihuahua are reported concentrating at various points awaiting transportation to the state capital.

As the Mexican forces move, the better class of residents of the district, who also hear that the Americans are about to be removed from this section of the country, are becoming frightened and are making their way to Chihuahua. They fear if the Carrancistas go to the capital and the Americans proceed south, they will be left at the mercy of the Villista bandits.

Many are taking their household goods and other movable property. Nothing is made public by the officers in command of this camp regarding the movements of the American forces operating further south.

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